

The Pyengyang Foreign School

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FOR SOME REASON the story of the Pyengyang Foreign School reminds me of the Gettysburg Address, of the swiftness and inevitableness of Caesar's "Veni, vidi, vici". A few days ago we sat in a beautifully fitted assembly hall in the new three-storey school building and heard Mrs. C. D. Morris, the School's first teacher, tell of the beginnings twenty-five years ago. There were eight families in Pyengyang then, one child was over six and could not read. The parents had dedicated their lives to an "unfinished task", but their great hope was to see their children prepared to take it up with increased devotion and with still higher resolve. A teacher was needed; one must be secured. So the first meeting of the parents was held at Dr. Baird's home in February 1899 and \$450 gold was promised. As Dr. and Mrs. Baird were soon to go to America on furlough, they were given instructions as to a teacher. She was to be "a Christian lady of evangelical denomination and missionary turn of mind, trained in kindergarten teaching and capable of preparing the children for college. Age twenty-eight to thirty-five preferred." We wonder at their courage in accepting, but realize the source when we read that in June, 1900 the committee was discharged with the feeling that they "had been divinely aided in their arduous task."

The first school building was the 'kwang' in the lower part of the Moffett yard, a building which had been the first missionary residence in the compound. One room of it was equipped with two tables, seven chairs, a handbell, books for the first grade, a small kindergarten outfit and a \$1.00 Ingersoll watch. The youngest pupil was two, the oldest seven; three were in the kindergarten and three in the first grade. They met with Miss Ogilvy for half-day sessions from June 15th, 1900 till early fall, when the little tiled building, just below

the old Lee house, and originally a Korean school, was ready for them.

Here the school grew slowly, but it grew. In 1903, for a new pupil, a new department was added, the High School, and music was dropped. That pupil was Harriette Whiting and how she would have revelled in such a music department as the present one!

As the years pass, such items of progress are recorded as the following:—

"William, together with neatness and accuracy, has gained considerable ability to think for himself". (Perhaps you can guess his surname.)

"Olivette, Wilbur and Mylo have done the most accurate and neatest work."

"Newlon and Lisette added pleasure and interest to the work."

"Alden has learned to write legibly."

A school library was early established and physiology was taught for some time by a practicing physician, Dr. Hall. In 1907 Doctors Follwell and Wells were empowered to establish a Physical Culture department, and the next year, in order that the boys might be kept in closer touch with the men of the community, a number of the latter gave talks at the school house. In 1907 and again in 1908 the question of securing an additional teacher was discussed but dropped for lack of funds. The work was better standardised, however, and report cards similar to those in use at Chefoo were printed and sent out regularly to the parents.

The Treasurer's report for 1906-07 seems to call for a trumpet "We have sent one teacher home, brought one out, and there is ¥ 600 balance." The teacher, Miss Strang, was assisted by Mrs. Swallen and Mrs. Wells. Later, Mrs. Curtis relieved Mrs. Swallen and during her whole stay here helped the school in many ways.

In 1909 Miss Strang and her flock of about

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eighteen pupils gathered, not in the little tiled building, but in a larger one, until then used as the "Men's Sarang". All appear to have been very happy in their new quarters. Besides the former equipment there were three long blackboards and a flagpole! Here Elizabeth Sharp wrote the words of the School Song:

"—our little School lies hidden,
Fruit trees whispering round.
Grassy nooks and clovered places,
Flowers there abound."

"And still the numbers grew". In 1911, Miss Trissel reports twenty-one children, five of them from other stations, so that in 1912 it was found necessary to begin the dormitory. Mrs. Ross kindly consented to come down from Syenchun to open it, remaining until Christmss-time, when Miss Moseley relieved her. That year there were nine children in the dormitory. In 1913, Mrs. Lockett, the matron appointed by the Presbyterian Board, came out though the money for her travel had to be advanced by friends in the station, and work was soon begun on the present dormitory building.

The dormitory opened with fifteen pupils, while the total enrolment for 1914 was twenty-eight. The following year, 1915-16, was a marked year in the school's history. There were two teachers giving full time throughout the year; Miss Hartness organized the Camp Fire Girls; Dr. Moffett organized the Eagle Patrol of the Boy Scouts, the first in Korea. The Christian Endeavorers met each Sunday evening at the dormitory and with Mrs. Lockett's help gathered taught a little heathen sunday school in the village below the wall. Even with the two teachers the work was not light and Bolling Reynolds reports the teaching of High School algebra, geometry, Latin, English and history. Miss Hartness writes for the primary department that "she might say fifty classes were taught daily in about sixteen branches, Nature study was emphasized this year, the children planting individual school gardens." In 1917 is recorded the first

formal graduation exercise for the grammar grades, though there had been promotions to the High School department as far back as 1912.

The school continued to grow. In 1920 there were twenty in the dormitory and in 1921 another milestone was reached in the employment of three full-time teachers in addition to the matron, Misses Boyer, Coutts and Lloyd being the three. The middle room in the school building was equipped for classroom work and the annex to the dormitory erected in order to care for the ever-growing size of the "Dorm." family. In 1922, Miss Foote came out under appointment of the Presbyterian Board to help in the High School work and Mrs. Ashe arrived to relieve Mrs. Thomas in the dormitory, as she felt unable to continue there longer, though remaining a member of the local community. To her four years of hard and faithful work the dormitory owes much of the success it has since attained. Through the generosity of Miss English it was possible to thoroughly equip and largely re-furnish the dormitory, making it a real home to the family of nearly forty that live there.

In the last three years the enrolment has grown to a total of 67, a fourth teacher has been added (Miss Gibson in 1924), the school has joined the Association of Schools for American Children in the Orient, Dr. Charles Erdman and Dr. Frank K. Sanders represent it in America, and a full course of study in the High School, including chemistry and physics, has been instituted. The first graduate from the High School received her diploma in 1925, although there had been Senior High School pupils several years earlier, but for one reason or another, they all left before the close of the school year.

In September 1924 the school moved once more, this time into its new three-storey brick structure, which will we hope be adequate to its needs for many years to come. It is a beautiful building and each room fills one with a sense of harmony. Mrs. J. Livingstone Taylor's generosity, which made the building

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possible, has found an enduring and worthy memorial. The handbell still calls the children in, motivated, I had almost said by the same Ingersoll watch, but I believe it is a Big Ben. Two lines of children pass into the primary and intermediate grade rooms downstairs, presided over by Misses Gibson and Jaquett. The High School and Junior High go upstairs to Miss Foote's and Miss Sloan's rooms. All gather for chapel or on special occasions in the beautiful assembly room with its stage and footlights. On the third floor are the library, music room and science laboratory.

That third floor reveals the secret of much of the school's popularity. There Mrs. Soltau spends a good deal of her time and no school has ever had a more remarkable music department than this that she has organized. Almost every pupil is enrolled for instrumental music, and many a mother is grateful for the enthusiasm that can kindle such a love for music in the children's hearts. Perhaps the most remarkable feature is the finished and capable work the student teachers are doing under her direction. But this is by no means the end of the school's musical advantages. Mrs. Ashe has charge of the instruction in public school music. Every child has his or her voice tested and is being trained to sing sweetly. For those who wish there are special classes in vocal music taught by Mrs. Lutz, and Mr. Reiner teaches violin. The third floor, too, is the home of the Boy Scout and Camp Fire activities, the latter has been in continual existence since 1913.

Mr. Shaw has the boys' entire devotion and with weekly meetings, hikes and excursions their progress in knowledge of woodcraft and in manly living has been very great. The well equipped Domestic Science Building of the Presbyterian Girls' Academy is used twice a week for classes in cooking and sewing under Miss Bergman's direction.

Do the students have good times? They certainly seem to, and taking a meal at the dormitory is more popular with outsiders than taking one outside can be to the "Dormites."

They (the students) have basket ball, tennis and volley ball, Camp Fire and Boy Scout excursions. (In 1923 the Scouts went to Peking). They have their annual Field Day in May, with athletic contests and May Pole dance, to say nothing of the good times at Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, and the regular Friday evening parties. Discipline, though real, has never been obtrusive, and now steps are being taken toward further organization and student government.

Do they study well? In 1911 Miss Trissel, an exceedingly skilful teacher and one of experience, commends them for faithful study, saying she "had never taught a school in which such earnest, willing and continual response was given." In 1916-17, out of a small eight grade class which took the New York State examinations, four passed with an average of over 90%. Last year an exhibit of the Art department delighted and astonished the parents and other visitors with the drawings, paintings and stencillings displayed. The exhibit showed the progress in each grade from Kindergarten through High School. Mrs. Baird was the recipient of heartfelt thanks for her painstaking and thorough work with the children.

The literary work of the school may be surmised from the school paper, the "Kum and Go", which in 1923 took the place of the less ambitious type-written "Dormitory News". Last year a most creditable annual was published, "Kulsi" by name.

That the influences of the school are of the best is shown by the fact that of the former teachers, seven have remained to become missionaries. One, Miss Gittins, has become a "representative at Washington". The alumni have made good in every way. Fourteen of them are back in Korea or in other mission fields, five others are engaged in religious work at home. Eleven are in professional work, six are in business, while a large percentage of those who have left us to continue their studies at home are planning to return again as soon as possible under one or other of the various Mission Boards.